



Branching Out

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Spring 2018

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Embrace Your Voice: SAAM 2018

By Samantha Sustachek



With the recent visibility of the #MeToo movement (see Kari's article on page 5), which used social media to call attention to the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment in our world, people everywhere are taking note of what happens when we join together and speak up about something. On the heels of #MeToo, this year's theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), which we are already more than halfway through, is "Embrace Your Voice." There are a number of ways you can use your voice this April and every day to raise public awareness of sexual violence and help educate our community on its prevention. One impactful way is through the practice of everyday consent.

Everyday consent is not limited to sexual consent and refers to the many ways we can ask permission, value choices, and respect the physical and emotional boundaries of others. Try it today by:

Asking for consent when touching – For those who are survivors of sexual assault, an unexpected or unwanted touch can be scary or traumatic. Everyone's preferences for personal space are a little different. Always ask for permission for touches like hugs and tickles. This goes for children as well as adults! Children need to know that their bodies belong to them.

Respecting privacy – Some people are more open with personal information, while others like to keep their private lives private. If someone entrusts you with personal information, be sure to keep it confidential unless you are given permission to share.

Asking permission – Again, everyone has different boundaries when it comes to what they are willing to share on the internet. Get permission before posting or tagging photos of others or their children on social media.

Understanding sex and consent – The most important thing to remember is that sex without consent is sexual assault. Consent must be given freely and enthusiastically each time, and an intoxicated person cannot give consent. People should never be coerced into consenting, and consent can be removed at any time if someone changes her/his mind. The absence of "no" never means "yes."

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Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

The 2017/2018 Wisconsin legislative session is wrapping up in the next few weeks, and two bills that impact sexual assault survivors have a good chance of becoming law.

The first bill relates to protecting child trafficking victims by ceasing to charge individuals who are under 18 with committing an act of prostitution. Currently in Wisconsin, a person can be charged with committing an act of prostitution, a Class A misdemeanor, even if the individual is less than 18 years of age. This bill will eliminate that charge in order to protect children who are being prostituted or trafficked, and states that a person who is under the age of 18 may not be prosecuted for committing an act of prostitution.

The second bill defines the procedures for how a defendant can access a crime victim's mental health records. Currently, a defendant can submit a motion to gain access to a crime victim's mental health records and can request the judge review the victim's records in camera to determine if they contain evidence relevant to guilt or innocence. This new bill contains more protections for crime victims. The new bill creates a procedure by which a defendant in a criminal case may seek access to the mental health treatment records of a crime victim that are not in the possession of or under the control of a government entity when he or she believes that those records contain information that is crucial to the defendant's defense. Under the bill, if a defendant wishes to gain access to the mental health treatment records of a crime victim, he or she must file a motion describing the information sought and show that there are mental health treatment records that are reasonably likely to contain the information sought, that the information is necessary to formulate an articulated defense, and that the information is not available from any other source. If the court finds that the defendant has made this showing by a preponderance of the evidence and that the potential benefit to the defendant is greater than the harm to the crime victim from disclosure, and if the crime victim consents, the court may conduct an in camera review of the mental health treatment records. Upon reviewing the records, if the court determines by clear and convincing evidence both that the information in the mental health treatment records is necessary to any articulated defense and that the benefit to the defendant from disclosure is greater than the harm to the crime victim from disclosure, or determines that the evidence is otherwise exculpatory, the court may order disclosure of the

records. Following this order, the crime victim may review the records that the court has determined should be disclosed and may consent to disclose the records, may appeal the court's decision, or may decline to disclose the records and be barred from testifying at the trial. If the crime victim declines to disclose his or her mental health treatment records for an in camera review, the court must abide by his or her declination and must permit the victim to testify at trial. The defendant, however may then comment on the declination and draw any reasonable inference therefrom. All filings and records pertinent to this process and the mental health treatment records of the victim are to be sealed by the court. Additionally, all decisions of the court during this process may be appealed at any time by the state or the crime victim as a matter of right. This bill also adds enumerated rights to the basic bill of rights for victims describing the right of a victim to privacy in his or her mental health treatment records, in accordance with the new procedure that the bill creates.

In the 2018 fall Branching Out newsletter there will be a full update on all the legislation that was passed during this session that impacts sexual assault survivors. This article is a very general update, so if you would like more detailed information on this legislation or on the legislative process, please contact Vicki Biehn at 262-619-1634 or vbiehn@lsswis.org or Ian Henderson from the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault at 608-257-1516 or ianh@wcasa.org.

—Vicki



SAS Program Statistics July—December 2017

Crisis Line Calls.....	85
Racine Hospital Visits.....	46
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	2
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	12
New Counseling Clients.....	16
Counseling Sessions.....	354
Support Group Sessions.....	15
Community Presentations.....	31
CAC Appointments.....	68



Rompiendo la Barrera

Breaking the Barrier

By Annabell Bustillos

I was fortunate to be able to attend The International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Gender Bias put on by End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) this month. Topics covered during the conference ranged from the prevalence of human trafficking to the bias in the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and domestic violence, to rape jokes, and so much more.

In this article I would like to share the information I received from a Plenary session regarding rape jokes. The Plenary was called Rape Jokes – The Canary in The Coal Mine. But why did the presenter, Dr. Gail Stern, who has a background in stand-up and improvisational comedy and has 25 years of experience in sexual violence prevention education, give her presentation that name?

Canaries were once regularly used in coal mining as an early warning system. Toxic gases such as carbon monoxide or methane in the mine would kill the bird before affecting the miners. Signs of distress from the bird indicated to the miners that conditions were unsafe. Rape jokes are the canary; they are the warning that the conditions ahead are unsafe.

Rape jokes are prevalent in the media and on social media these days. Dr. Stern gave many examples from current advertisements of well-known businesses like Belvedere vodka, Virgin Mobil, Bloomingdale's, and Budweiser, that all had messages of sexual assault meant to be seen as a joke. This is illustrated by the two examples I am sharing: one from Bloomingdale's, which suggests spiking a friend's eggnog and another from Belvedere vodka in which a woman looks like she is trying to escape from the man holding on to her. Most of us go about our lives without really noticing them, and sometimes we may even laugh or ignore some of the less noticeable ads and jokes.

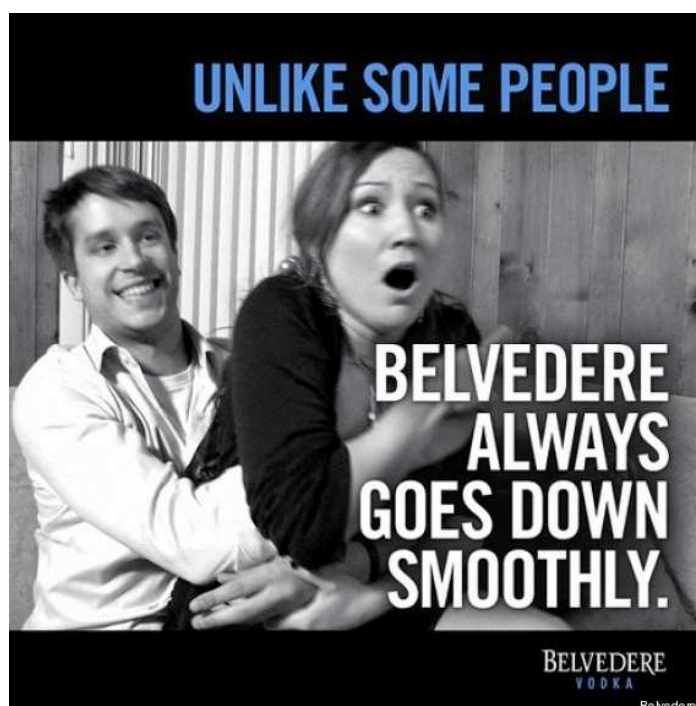
But what is the real cost of laughing or ignoring these jokes? Rape jokes can have a serious effect on survivors of sexual assault. We know that about one in four women and one in six men are victims of sexual assault in their lifetimes, so there is an incredible and unfortunate likelihood that a survivor is hearing it and could be negatively affected.

Commercials, jokes, and images that are constantly playing in the background of our lives can also normalize sexual assault and rape. It can cause individuals to question what "real" rape

looks like. It can also minimize the severity of a serious crime, as well as condone and possibly even encourage violence and predatory behavior. Joking about rape can also validate rapists in their behavior and thinking and give them the idea that sexual violence is funny and acceptable.

The speaker closed her talk with this food for thought that I would like to share: "A sexist joke will not make you sexist if you are not sexist, but it will increase your tolerance of sexism and over time it can even justify victim blaming." So, I encourage everyone who hears a rape joke to speak up and share the effects that they can have on our society.

—Annabell



Belvedere Vodka Advertisement



Bloomingdale's Advertisement



Family Advocate

By Christa Dasher

April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention Month, so I would like to take this opportunity to discuss how you can help protect children from child sexual abuse by being an active bystander. Child sexual abuse prevention starts with responsible adults. A bystander is a person who is not directly involved in an interaction but senses something is unsafe or witnesses a boundary violation or vulnerable situation for a child. In any given interaction, the child and offender are the least likely to intervene in their own situation. This is why being an active bystander is so important.

The steps to being an active bystander consist of noticing what you see, trusting what you feel, acknowledging your fears, taking responsibility, and acting. You may wonder: What kind of behaviors should I be noticing? Some risky behaviors that may be considered red flags include:

- Excessive touching and blurring touching boundaries
- Building/gaining trust
- Giving gifts and rewards
- Giving special attention
- Manipulating surrounding adults
- Breaking rules and pressing boundaries
- Focusing intensely on children
- Seeking isolation and one-on-one contact
- Private communication through social media
- Overly eager for children's affection
- Taking photos or videos of an individual child

The process of acting on a feeling or concern you have is providing an intervention. There are two types of interventions: spontaneous and planned.

A spontaneous intervention is an immediate action. You can do this first by describing the behavior that is problematic. An example of this is "It looks like you are forcing (child) to hug you. He/She looks uncomfortable." The next step is setting a limit that reinforces the child's boundaries. For example, "Please stop. We let (child) decide who she wants to show affection to." The last step is to move on to the solution. For example, "(Child), let's go see what the other children are doing."

A planned intervention occurs over a period of time and may include multiple conversations. Before you begin an

intervention it is important to protect yourself and the child from any potential for violence. You should seek support from others if needed. You can start the conversation by expressing care or appreciation for the person. For example, you could say: "I care about you and my child." The next step is to proceed to describe the problematic behavior(s). For example, "When you go in the basement alone with (child), it makes me uncomfortable." Then, you should set a limit that reinforces the child's boundaries. An example is "These are the boundaries I need for (child)." The last part of the planned intervention should be to move on to the solution. For example, the child may not be alone with this particular person anymore. It is important to communicate with others who need to understand the new boundaries. Write down the intervention and the outcomes, so nothing is forgotten. Also be sure to share with the child and other adults the boundaries you've set. As necessary, revisit and review the intervention with those involved.

If there is a pattern of boundary violations, or if you've intervened and boundary violations continue, you now have reasonable suspicion, and you should make a report. If at any point you have a serious concern for sexual abuse or a child's safety, make a report to law enforcement or child protective services. Remember, your actions are an important part of protecting the children you care about from child sexual abuse.

—Christa

Adapted from Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children training: Bystanders Protecting Children From Boundary Violations and Sexual Abuse.

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By practicing everyday consent and knowing how to take "no" for an answer, we can make our community safer and more comfortable for sexual assault survivors while helping to prevent future sexual assaults from occurring. By embracing our voices, we can show support for survivors, stand up to victim blaming, and correct harmful misconceptions about sexual assault. For more information about SAAM and more ideas on how to "Embrace Your Voice," visit the National Sexual Violence Resource Center's SAAM website at <https://www.nsvrc.org/saam>.

During April and every day, Sexual Assault Services (SAS) works to help sexual assault survivors heal while raising our community's awareness of and sensitivity to this issue. On April 18th, we held our 4th annual Seeds of Change luncheon and awards ceremony and recognized community members who use their actions and voices to improve the response to sexual assault survivors in Racine. It's not too late to join in on Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Try wearing denim in protest of victim blaming on Denim Day on April 25th, or find your own way to "Embrace Your Voice" this April. As the #MeToo movement proved, even the smallest actions, when joined with the actions of others, make a huge difference for survivors.

—Sam



Face to Face

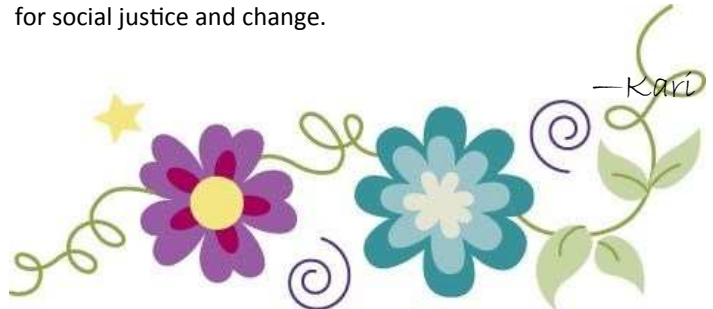
By Kari Wilder

There is no denying the impact social media has had on our lives since the creation of Myspace in 2004. Users could now have 24/7 access to the thoughts, opinions, music preferences, images, and even celebrity crushes of any user who they had accepted a friend request from. It's now 2018 and social media use has increased even more, especially with the creation of smart phones. Social media has now become so commonplace it is rare to encounter an individual who doesn't have at least one social media account. It's become common practice, particularly among teenagers, to exchange social media handles before exchanging phone numbers. Social media is even used by businesses and organizations to provide information to potential customers or clients and to promote any upcoming events. While in 2004 the platform with the most users was Myspace, social media has now expanded and the most commonly used platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Social media has even influenced our language. Before August 2017, most people referred to “#” as a pound sign but Twitter changed its name and meaning when it began using the symbol to allow users to find other individuals who are talking about a similar topic or sharing a similar image, and most people now refer to the symbol as a hashtag.

In 2006, before hashtags, Tarana Burke created the “Me Too” movement in an effort to provide healing through empathy. The goal of the movement is to empower survivors of sexual assault and harassment by letting them know that they are not alone. On October 15th, 2017, actress Alyssa Milano posted a tweet in support of her friend and fellow actress Rose McGowan who had spoken out about sexual harassment at the hands of Harvey Weinstein, a famous film producer. In the tweet she asked that individuals tweet “me too” if they have been sexually harassed or assaulted so that the world could get an idea of the magnitude of the problem. This turned into “#MeToo” and the tweet spread rapidly through all social media platforms reaching millions of people. In just a few days, social media was flooded with women telling the world with a simple hashtag, #MeToo, that they were survivors, and they quickly found that even in their own friend groups they weren't alone. The hashtag allowed survivors to share their stories and receive support from others. Many survivors do not disclose out of fear of not being believed. The #MeToo movement allowed survivors to reach people who would not meet them with disbelief or questions but acceptance and empathy.

Many celebrities shared with the world that they too are survivors. It allowed survivors and the world to see that survivors and predators come in all shapes and sizes and from all socio-economic groups. In direct response to the power of the #MeToo movement, actors and actresses wore all black to the 75th Golden Globe Awards in solidarity with the 700,000 female farmworkers bringing awareness to the sexual harassment and assault of women of all walks of life. They used the hashtag #TimesUp on all social media platforms.

The #MeToo movement did more than just provide individuals with a community they could lean on. In my opinion one of the most important things about the #MeToo movement is that it in many ways encouraged a generation that grew up in front of computer screens and on social media to find their voice and bring awareness to the things that impact their lives. It showed the world the impact viral awareness campaigns can have. The reality is that, in a world where our phone is our lifeline, corporations and politicians look to social media to discover what is important to consumers and our new generation of voters. The #MeToo movement allowed teenagers and college students to unite and advocate for a different future. A future where they could be safe from sexual harassment or sexual assault. A future where they could speak out without fear. Through social media they were able to tell the world “I matter, this matters to me, so you better do something.” The #MeToo movement helped shape social media into more than music preferences and fashion trends. It became a platform for social justice and change.



Thank you to everyone who joined us for this year's Seeds of Change luncheon in honor of SAAM 2018!



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262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
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Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 109

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Spanish Crisis Line: 262-424-3134

Website: <http://www.sasoflss.org>

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

Sexual Assault Services is funded by United Way of Racine County, Victims of Crime Act grant, Sexual Assault Victim Services grant, the Racine Community Foundation, the Runzheimer Foundation, and the support of generous local donors.